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**The Episcopal
Diocese of Taiwan**

The Rt. Rev. David Lai,
Bishop

This issue, we ask all to remember in prayer the Most Rev. Rowan D. Williams and his family. Archbishop Rowan is to be enthroned as the Archbishop of the Mother Church of the Anglican Communion in Canterbury on February 27, 2003.

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Pray Constantly and Together with Faith to Revive the Church

-from the Bishop, The Right Rev. David Lai-

After being on my knees, humbly praying for a long time, I am quite sure that this is the "vision" which God has given to us for 2003.

Some Episcopalians in this Diocese have told me that using the Book of Common Prayer on Sundays has made them unable to pray in public. They feel that they do not have the ability to pray with their own words, that their prayers are not beautiful enough or properly spoken. They lack confidence in their own ability to pray prayers that would not be offensive to God. On the contrary, I believe we must pray *faithfully*. At all times and in all places, we should exercise this gift of prayer to enrich our spiritual life and deepen our relationship with God and those around us. We must surrender our helplessness, and our feeling of inadequacy to God. Call on God for His help and guidance.

John 15:5 always encourages me to practice my faith: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." If we plant a tree, then we carefully chose where we plant it so that it receives adequate sunshine. We must tend to the tree in the garden. We water the tree and fertilize the soil, so that the tree will bear good fruit. Everyone knows that trees cannot produce good fruit or beautiful blossoms without water, nutrition and sunshine. And so it is with our spiritual life. If we are to bear good fruit, we must tend to our Spirit. We must bask in the glory of God's sunshine in regular fellowship and communion with our community of faith. We must water our spirit with the Word of God, and fertilize our Spirit with prayer. We must tend to our spirit or else it will wither and become sick and, perhaps, even die. In John 15:6 we read, "If anyone does not remain in me, he is like the branches that are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned." I pray that no one will be thrown like a branch into the fire and burned by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Repentance and prayer to the righteous God will lead us to holiness. God is always listening to our prayers, no matter how they are spoken. Hebrews 11:6 tells us, "without faith it is impossible to please God." We must trust God and believe that He knows what is in our hearts. A close, prayerful relationship with God means that the Holy Spirit will be our guide and strength and will keep us pure, and the body of Christ will be built up. So, I encourage you to pray at all times and in all places. This is something we should do both alone *and* in community. Pray with your family and your friends. Pray for your family, your friends, for harmony in your home, your workplace, and the world. Pray. God is listening.

May each of us be equipped for good works, which God has prepared for us to do in advance. May His name be glorified.

Report from Father Witcher to the New Westminster Diocesan Council

(The following article is from a report by the Rev. Graham Witcher presented to the New Westminster Diocesan Council on January 14, 2003 regarding his service of ministry with the Taiwan Diocese from November 1, 2000 through October 31, 2002. It has been edited for length.)

Having announced my intention to retire from All Saints Ladner effective June 30 2000, I was intrigued by the remark of David Lai, Coadjutor Bishop of Taiwan, at the business meeting of our Synod in May 2000, that there might be a vacancy for the English-speaking Chaplain at Church of the Good Shepherd, Taipei. Valerie and I were guests of the church for one week in August 2000, felt drawn to the appointment, and completed the necessary paper work in about ten weeks. Our date of arrival, October 31 2000 was marked by a typhoon and – two hours after our landing – the takeoff crash on the runway of a Singapore Airlines 747 at Chiang Kai Shek airport. And the Chinese believe in omens?!

THE CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

In 1963, when there was still a considerable American military presence in Taiwan, certain Episcopal laypeople began holding services of Morning Prayer in rented accommodation. Within three years, and in four ever-larger rooms, land was given for a church to be built for the congregation, now being served by an American Episcopal priest. In a wonderful twist of irony the Church of the Good Shepherd, designed by an American architect and reflecting typical Chinese architecture, is the only such building in Taiwan. All the other churches are fairly generic and non-descript!

Over time the parish morphed from an English-speaking congregation deliberately offering services in Chinese to a Chinese-speaking congregation continuing to offer services in English. There is an English service at 9:30am and a Chinese service at 11:00am each Sunday, except on the fourth Sunday of each month when a combined service takes place at 10:30 am. At this service, the liturgy, readings and hymns are printed in both languages; and the preacher of the day has her/his sermon immediately and fluently translated into the “other” language. There is one vestry, comprised of members of both congregations, administering one budget, with commendable liaison between the language groups.

The parish has an enviable record of

outreach. It runs a kindergarten of around 180 children with Montessori-trained staff; it offers a “grey-hair” college of many classes for seniors in the area; it employs three social workers for its seniors-at-home outreach; it offers the first, and so far only, Meals on Wheels program in Taiwan; and it has many and strong links with the SOS Children’s Village in nearby Jungli.

On our arrival in Taipei, the Reverend Elizabeth Wei (the first woman priest in Taiwan) was the Rector, and her husband, the Reverend Peter Chen was the Honorary Assistant. When Peter retired from being Director of the Taiwan Railway Authority he was free about a year later to become Interim Non-stipendiary Priest-in-Charge when Elizabeth retired. The chemistry between the three of us was exceptional, and to be part of the monthly combined service has lodged in my memory as sheer grace and glory.

The responsibilities of the English Chaplain were as one might expect: liturgy, (youth) and adult spiritual formation, pastoral care, outreach and administration. I inherited a weekly Bible Study group made up entirely of Chinese-speaking people (only two of ten being baptized Christians), who unashamedly used the class to improve their English. With this group, surprisingly, I was able to go deeper and stay there longer, in terms of theological reflection, than was the case with the English-speaking Sunday congregation. Go figure!

Lay leadership in all aspects of the liturgy was encouraged, some ministries requiring the license of the Bishop, much as is the case here. In all this, however, the down side was that I was not required, nor proved to have the stamina necessary to learn Chinese.

THE DIOCESE OF TAIWAN

This failure to speak, read or write Chinese mattered more in the Deanery and Diocesan settings in which I was expected to function. Fortunately, all the clergy without exception spoke English to a greater or lesser extent. But it meant that I had to sidle alongside one of them, ask for instantaneous translation, and thereby exclude my translator from their own effective contribution to the meeting. If Chinese had a recognizable alphabet I think I could have coped better; but it doesn’t, and I didn’t.

The Diocese of Taiwan is part of Province

VIII of the Episcopal Church of the United States. It boasts thirteen congregations, with the cathedral, St. John the Divine, located in Taipei. The de facto cathedral in the south of the island is St. Timothy's, Kaohsiung. The majority of the clergy are approaching, or past retirement age; and almost all of them were trained in the Presbyterian Seminary in Taichung, with additional study in the United States or the United Kingdom. More recent ordinands have been trained in the Catholic Seminary in Taipei.

Ecumenical relations are good between mainstream denominations, less fruitful with the evangelical groupings. I enjoyed the monthly get-togethers of the Taipei Ministerial, and formed one-third of a bi-weekly support group with a Southern Baptist and Presbyterian professor. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was an annual highlight; and invitations to preach in other churches were welcome, if scarce events.

Clergy of the Northern Deanery, with the Chairman flying in from the south each week, have completed their labour of love, translating the American Prayer Book into current Chinese. To be part of this weekly gathering was great fun, my role being to advise on the subtleties of the English text, more an interpreter than a translator. In a related area, I

was privileged to give four lectures at my first diocesan clergy retreat in Chunghua; and to present a different four lectures to the Christian Council of South East Asia, a gathering of bishops from the region, at their retreat in Kenting.

For all my years as an Anglican (following on ten years as a Baptist minister) I achieved two "first's" in my two years in Taiwan. I attended my first consecration and the separate installation of David Lai in Kaohsiung in November 2000, and in Taipei in August 2001. The new bishop, succeeded John Chien as the second Taiwanese-born bishop; all the predecessors having been either American-Chinese or Hong Kong Chinese.

Rather than Synod, the diocese calls an Annual Diocesan Meeting, its membership being clergy and elected laity. But the event itself is far more relaxed and user-friendly. Anyone wishing to speak uses a microphone facing the people, greets them with "Brothers and sisters in Christ, Peace be with you", and converses rather than addresses. Whether by design of default, this virtually eliminates confrontation, and affirms the nature of the church as a family organism rather than a hierarchical organization. And in this setting, as in the parish, the fervour of the prayers and the gusto of the singing are inspirational. (cont'd. p.4)



FAREWELL AND GODSPEED SERVICE FOR FATHER GRAHAM
(from l to r) Fr. Peter Chen, Pr. Philip Stringer, The Rt. Rev. David Lai, Fr. Graham Witcher, Deacon Joseph Wu

(Cont'd from page 3)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DIOCESAN PARTNERSHIP

In my two years there, two groups from our diocese visited. Four women, two ordained and two laity, spent two weeks galloping around the island, meeting and greeting new-found friends in Christ. And five youth and accompanying adults served as facilitators at the two-week long English language summer school at St. John's and St. Mary's Institute of Technology.

I have expressed my own "mea culpa" with regard to the Chinese language and won't go there again, except to recommend that anyone drawn to visit Taiwan (for pleasure or work) should acquire at least conversational/survival Mandarin as a courtesy to the hosts, and a bonus for oneself.

Clergy exchange visits, of at least three months duration would be a mutually enriching experience, for the clergy and the congregations. Volunteer Teachers of English As A Second Language are always in demand, and a way might be found for a church or group of churches to provide board and lodging for such (a) volunteer(s). St. John's and St. Mary's Institute of Technology, Tamshui offers accommodation for a person or couple for a contract of a year or two; and would relish a repeat of last year's visit by youth from this diocese as summer school facilitators.

Vis-à-vis the proposal for clergy exchange, I need to report on my successor at Church of the Good Shepherd. As a direct result of the concordat between the Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and to realize his long-felt attraction to China, the Reverend Philip Stringer, a Lutheran pastor most recently in a Chicago suburban charge, has been appointed as the first (Lutheran pastor to serve) in an Episcopalian pastorate. All the reports I have received on this bold experiment are glowing. There are those who claim Thomas Cranmer was a closet Lutheran....

To coin a phrase, I wouldn't have missed this opportunity for all the tea in China. Which is a wonderful segue into my closing comment. Bishop David Lai is an expert at and evangelist for the Chinese tea ceremony. To have him infuse, pour and share his oolong tea is an appetizer fit for those bound for heaven!

Finding Jesus

John 1:43-51

*(Excerpted from a sermon by
the Rev. Philip Stringer)*

I found Jesus in a taxi the other day. There he was, riding along with me, and I didn't even see him there.

Patty was busy, so I was going to the school to pick up the girls. On the way, the taxi driver asked me if I was a teacher. His English was terrible. My Chinese is worse. I said, "No, just a parent."

When we arrived at the school, he said something to me that I couldn't understand. I smiled and nodded and started to get out when I suddenly understood. He had said, "Jesus loves you."

Slightly stunned, I turned and looked at him. He smiled. I smiled. "Yes, indeed," I said. "And Jesus loves you, too."

This season of Epiphany is the season of "revealing" the presence and identity of Christ. It is a season of signs that point to him. And it is the perfect time for asking ourselves questions, like, "who are the people God has placed in your life to serve as signs that point you to faith in Jesus?" For me, the

other day, it was a taxi driver. How about you? And how is God using you as a sign to others, that they may come to faith in him?

The gospel of John is a "book of signs" that point to faith in Jesus. In John's gospel, signs are almost always necessary for coming to faith in Jesus. In just the first chapter, there are many "signs" that point people to faith in Jesus: Jesus' baptism is a sign to John the Baptist that Jesus is the Messiah. John the Baptist then serves as a sign that points to Jesus, "I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God." Andrew points his brother, Peter, to the Messiah. The author of the gospel even sees what he has written as a "sign" that points the reader to faith in Jesus, "these things are written that you might come to believe that Jesus is the messiah..."

In our gospel lesson, Nathanael is seated under a fig tree and meets the proclamation of Philip with cynicism and contempt—"can anything good come out of Nazareth?" His comment doesn't necessarily mean he doesn't care. In fact, he makes this comment while seated under a fig tree, which was a traditional place for contemplation—especially for scholars. Presumably, Nathanael is seated under a fig tree precisely because he IS waiting expectantly for the coming of the

Messiah— he just doesn't expect him to come from a no-account hick town like Nazareth, and certainly not as a carpenter. Nathanael is looking, but he fails to see. It is Philip who serves as the sign that points the way for Nathanael to come to faith in Jesus. "We have found him," said Philip. "Come and see!"

What are the signs— past and present— which God has placed into your life to point you toward Jesus, and to bring you to faith in him? Sometimes, they may not be what you expect at all— like my taxi driver— but they will point you to Christ. They will reveal his presence to you.

When Philip approached Nathanael, he said to him "we have found him of whom (the scriptures speak)." That's not actually true. The Gospel of John is full of signs and signs are usually necessary in John for people to come to faith in Jesus. But Philip is an exception. It is Jesus who comes to Philip and finds him! I don't think Philip is lying. I think that when he says "we have found him," he is saying that he has come to believe. The truth is, of course, that God finds you— not the other way around.

A friend wrote to me the other day and said that his New Year's resolution is to "pursue God." **REAL JOY** comes when you *discover* that it's actually the other way around. God is pursuing you— relentlessly— because He loves you. I hope that my friend knows this. What I hope he is REALLY saying is that he intends to actively seek out the signs of God in his life, and seek to follow God's will. Truly, God is pursuing you in earnest. He goes to the cross in pursuit of you. He comes in the waters of your baptism in pursuit of you. He comes under the forms of bread and wine in pursuit of you— and he continues to meet you in your daily life.

"We have found him," said Philip. But Jesus isn't lost, of course. He is everywhere. And if he IS hidden— then he has placed signs EVERYWHERE that we might find him. He wants to be found. Rather than asking where Jesus is, perhaps a better question is, "where are you prepared to look for him?" The signs pointed Nathanael to a place where he didn't expect to find Jesus— in a Galilean carpenter from Nazareth. Where will you look for him?

Jesus surprised me the other day riding on a city bus! I was carrying a load of stuff from the apartment to my office. I got on the bus and it was crowded— and of course, the elderly get the seats.

But this tiny, little old lady got up. She was wearing a necklace of trinkets that represented gods of folk religion. She wasn't a Christian, but she smiled at me and insisted I take her seat. "No, no, no," I said. But she insisted and so I accepted her gift. As I was getting off later, she returned to her seat— our eyes met— she smiled again, and I thought, "I know that smile. Where have I seen that smile before? Ah, yes! That's Jesus' smile."

Where will you look for him? I saw his smile on the face of a nonbeliever. I also saw his smile on a taxi driver. And if we will look still closer, we will find not only his smile. We will find his tears. We will find his hands. We will find his arms, and his voice. Where will you look for him? And how are you being set forth as a sign to others?

Jesus says to Philip, "come follow me." And what does Philip do? He *leaves* Jesus, and goes to get Nathanael! Following Jesus isn't about "sticking close to Jesus." It's about pointing to Jesus. And if we look at the example of Philip, we can learn a lot about how to be a good "sign." Pointing to Jesus (being a sign) doesn't mean to convert people. Philip goes to Nathanael and shares his joy and his good news, "we have found him!" When Nathanael poo-poops what he has to say, Philip doesn't enter into an argument with him. No one ever got argued into the kingdom! Philip believes, and he simply shares his joy, and then an invitation: "come and see!" That's GREAT evangelism.

You are a sign— if you have "found" something of value, share the good news of it— and don't worry about converting. Just tell people what you have seen and believe— let them see in you the difference that joy makes— and invite them to come and see for themselves. Someone once put it like this: we are like beggars telling other beggars where to find bread.

Where is God placing signs in your life to point you toward faith in Jesus? How is it that you can serve as a sign that points others to faith in him?

Jesus surprised me the other day riding on a city bus!

REAL JOY
comes
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... God is
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because He
loves you.

LOVE OR LABEL?

by Steven Schaufele, Ph.D.

Early in the 19th century, General Convention declared that all Episcopalians, by virtue of their Baptism, are missionaries; all Episcopalians are by definition members of the 'Domestic & Foreign Missionary Society', that being merely an alternative name of the Episcopal Church. In the Baptismal Liturgy, we are called upon to 'confess the Faith of Christ Crucified [and] proclaim His Resurrection'. So what, exactly, is it that we, especially as Christians in a non-Christian land, should be proclaiming? What is our goal? Is it to 'win converts', to add numbers to the parish rolls, to convert as many as possible of the people we meet into 'card-carrying' Christians, who in some manner or other explicitly wear the label 'Christian'? Or is it to let everybody know that God loves them, that the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus is proof of God's infinite Love for them, and to encourage them, whatever they are, whatever they do, to open their hearts, souls, and minds to that Love, to allow it to come into their lives and enrich them and remold their understanding, their perceptions? Which of these will more glorify God?

Some will quote Acts 4:12, that the Name of Jesus is the only name by which anybody may be saved. And this is very true; salvation comes only through the revelation of God in Christ Jesus. It is only through understanding and welcoming God as God is manifest in Jesus that anyone can be saved. But the God manifest in Jesus is not a hard-hearted dictator, hung up on labels and whether His supplicants are enrolled in the 'correct' parish roster, but rather a generous, loving, liberal God Who welcomes all people to turn to Him. The same person who delivered that famous line in Acts 4:12, St. Peter, also said, somewhat later (and wiser?), 'I have come to realize that God has no favourites, but that anybody, of any background, who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to Him.' (Acts 10:34-35)

Our goal is not to scare our hearers into signing up with us, with our parish or our denomination. Our goal is not to fill our hearers' hearts with fear that, unless they do so, they are damned for all eternity. That would indeed be an 'ill-spell', 'bad news'. No, our goal is to 'proclaim the Gospel, the Good News of God in Christ'.

That Good News is the proclamation that God loves us, loves us enough to live and die for us. It is not that God is *only* on our side if we sign the 'correct' parish roll. It is that God is on our side, *period/full stop*. And therefore, as St. Paul said, 'If God is on our side, who can be against us?' (Romans 8:31). Please note that, in this same verse, St. Paul says, 'What more is there to say?' In a sense, this is the *sum total* of the Gospel: *God is on our side — always, eternally, crucially on our side*. This proclamation sets us free, and sets our hearers free, from all the superstitious fears and hangups that poison and needlessly complicate our lives. God is not on the side of the Episcopalians, or the Catholics, or the Christians, any more than He is on the side of the Jews or the Buddhists or the Taoists or the Hindus or any other sort of person one can name, any other distinguishing label one can think of. God is on the side of all of us!

In the name of Christ, I will be bold here and admit that among other things, I am suggesting that it is not part of our Commission to compel our hearers to give up the lifestyles, the cultures, the belief-structures they are familiar with; it is not part of our Commission to turn our Buddhist or Taoist Taiwanese neighbours into nice, Western-style church-going Christians. It is to proclaim to them the 'Good News of God in Christ' - the Good News that God loves them, that they can face Life, the Universe, and Everything with confidence and without fear. It is not the Buddhist and Taoist temples and religion that are our enemies; our foes are the little superstitious fears and hangups that throng in the hearts of the people around us. We are

called to let them know that those fears are nothing but shadows, without substance. It is those persnickety little superstitious fears we are called to drive off, in the name of Christ. If we do our work well, our neighbours' lives will be filled instead with the liberating Love of God in Christ - and they will be able to go on with their lives, in the manner that seems most suitable for them, which may involve continuing to worship God in a Buddhist or Taoist context. But, as our proclamation sinks into their souls, the God they so worship will come more and more to resemble the loving God Who is manifest in Jesus.

(Steven Schaufele is a member of The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd. He is a professor of Linguistics at Soochow University, Taipei. He is from Urbana, Illinois and has been living in Taipei for 5 years.)

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HARD-
HEARTED
DICTATOR
...

EPIPHANIES

by Patty Stringer

It has been a year of Epiphanies.

I can remember when I was in high school and college pondering how God was at work in my life. I really hadn't a clue. I tried to figure out what the great I mystery was that God had in store for me. I spent hours in deep conversations with friends into the wee hours of the morning. They hadn't a clue, either.

And I am not certain when it happened. But somewhere between college and parenthood, I came to understand that there is no great mystery. But that life is a succession of little ones. God reveals Himself to me every day in many, many little ways, if only I will remain open to His wondrous Spirit.

Phil and I have been hoping to enter into the missionary field for years. About the time we had begun to give up and look to do our work elsewhere, a small thing happened. The phone rang. That phone call set into motion a process and placement over the course of months that followed. And here we are.

Throughout those months, God revealed Himself to us many, many times. In the kind gestures of those who did whatever they could to support our decision- packing my dishes, loading the moving truck, providing a storage facility, taking care of my children, farewell parties, lunches, dinners, cups of coffee. . . At a time when my whole life was about to change, God surrounded me in the love and support of family and friends who said to me, "yes."

And God reveals Himself to me here and now. In the smiling faces anxiously awaiting our arrival through the customs gate at Chang-Kai-

Shek Airport, in the smiling faces of the gentle people on the bus, in the kind, understanding words of other expatriates, who know what it is to leave behind everything familiar, and on the train platform.

I was about to talk myself into a really lousy mood one day. It was December 23rd. We were all just settling into that 3 month culture shock slump, just in time for the holidays. The kids were out of school now and the apartment suddenly seemed much smaller than before. I had only two hours to go get a Christmas errand run before I had to return home. It required a bus, train, bus trip and, as we all know, timing is critical. As I ascended the escalator at the MRT, bracing myself for failing at my task before I had even begun it, the most amazing thing happened.

A little old lady approached me, smiling. She said something to me in Chinese. I just smiled and shook my head—she repeated it again and I said, "I'm sorry, English only." A young woman stepped over to me and said, "uh—she said, uh, Merry Christmas." OH! "Oh!" I said, "Merry Christmas to you, too!" as I smiled back at the old woman. She pointed to the cross I was wearing around my neck, crossed herself, smiled again and began to sing to me in Chinese— Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright. When she finished, I sang it back to her in English. We exchanged smiles again. Then my train arrived and, as we were going opposite directions, we parted. In that moment, at that time, God revealed Himself to me. Whether I made it to the department store or not, this trip had not been a failure.

And so, I try to anticipate each new day in this way- How will He come to me today?

Agnus Day by James Wetzstein

